

Section III: Materials Policy

CHW's systemwide environmental policy affirms our commitment to seek "new and better ways to meet its environmental goals through conservation, reduction, reuse and recycling programs." The policy goes on to describe the role of the Environmental Action Committee as responsible for establishing goals and objectives and overseeing implementation of the policy. The approach to honoring this policy emphasizes the role and obligation of each employee in preventing or reducing pollution, enhancing recycling and reuse of materials and conserving resources. Several centers of responsibility exist within our hospitals to organize and lead our employees in the implementation of our materials policy. At Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta, for instance, the procurement of goods with recycled content is part of the activities of the Purchasing Department, as is the use of reusable commodities. The Environmental Services staff track the quantity of materials that are recycled and evaluate waste segregation practices in order to make informed decisions in implementing our materials policy.

Conservation of Materials

Unlike some business sectors, CHW does not have or use toxic chemicals in significant quantities. Even with a small chemical inventory, we are moving further in the elimination of those chemicals that have been important historically in health-care, but hazardous to the environment. For example, the SBS unit has been collecting information from our vendors regarding their use of mercury and polyvinyl chloride so that we may better select environmentally friendly products. In consideration of these factors, CHW is placing its emphasis on chemical elimination rather than on chemical tracking.

We are also moving forward in the conservation of other materials. For example, more of our hospitals are evaluating and selecting vendors to supply bio-hazardous waste tubs and red bags that are made from recycled sharps containers rather than from virgin materials. Suppliers are requested to ship orders on reusable pallets where possible rather than in cardboard boxes. SBS has acquired a binding machine to limit the number of plastic, metal and cardboard binders used for presentations. Further, CHW places a very high value on purchasing materials that are manufactured at least in part from recycled materials. The new headquarters of SBS was an existing building, remodeled using recycled

materials such as the wainscoting and moldings that are made from recycled industrial waste. SBS also routinely orders products made from recycled materials, including writing pads, filing materials and desk accessories. We are a member of the Recycled Paper Coalition, and are committed to purchasing recycled paper.

Waste Reduction

CHW continues to implement programs that are designed to help eliminate or reduce the generation of waste by focusing environmentally intelligent practices at the front end of materials life span. Our hospitals continually seek opportunities to use premixed chemicals and to order in bulk to reduce packaging. We use reusable versus disposable products where possible, such as basin sets, surgical gowns, underpads, flatware, dishwater, and sterilization wrappers. Two-sided photocopying is performed wherever feasible.

Further down the waste stream, the reduction in volume of medical waste is constantly stressed, and is implemented by facilitating the segregation of medical and non-medical wastes. St. Bernardine Medical Center has succeeded in reducing the disposal of other wastes to landfill by 40 percent.

Recycling and Reuse

CHW is moving forward with its systemwide materials purchasing program designed to assist all of our hospitals in maximizing the utilization of products that are recycled, reusable, and otherwise environmentally friendly. Systemwide goals will be established to give environmental priority and direction to the materials component of our operations. For example, goals will be established for materials involving plastics, disposables, utensils, packaging, scrub wear, vending machines, food products, and durability, repairability and reusability of products. Elements of the program include systemwide interdisciplinary value analysis teams that consider environmental impact analysis of products in terms of energy and water consumption, amount of packaging, ergonomics, noise, safety, ease of maintenance, waste streams, contents and ingredients, and vendor environmental performance. We anticipate that this analysis will lead to a preferred vendor certification program, described in more detail

in Section X. These activities will become an integral part of our systemwide asset management program that guides our investments in, as well as liquidation and disposal of, materials. By conducting periodic monitoring and analysis of materials that are liquidated or disposed of, CHW will continuously improve our front-end investments in materials that conform to our environmental goals.

All of our hospitals routinely conduct recycling activities. Materials included in our recycling activities are plastic/sterile wraps, paper, newspaper, cardboard, bottles and cans, in addition to medical, industrial and hazardous waste, such as used oil and silver from x-ray processors and developers. SBS has completed arrangements through its recycling vendor to have their solid waste taken to a city sorting station which achieves very high percentages of waste that is recycled; now only 10 to 20 percent of the solid waste stream is disposed. SBS also has emphasized the value of increased awareness about recycling in order to achieve environmental objectives. They post signs at recycling areas with information on what is recyclable and where it can be recycled; and they issue "sendall" e-mail messages promoting recycling. Several of our hospitals have developed metrics for their recycling programs. These metrics show tremendous progress toward reaching recycling goals for paper, for example, as depicted in Figure 1.

Reuse continues to be another important component of our materials management policy. For example, St. Francis Medical Center actively participates in a community-based school program that makes art out of scrap. Marian Medical Center is opening its "Franciscan Store" to temporarily stage waste items from various departments for reuse. Employees and visitors may visit the store and take items of their choice for reuse, including cardboard boxes, batteries and other items. As discussed above, Dominican Hospital continues to operate a showcase reuse practice with DominAgain, where such items as plastic food buckets with lids, 5-gallon cleaning solution buckets, continuous form boxes with lids, clean wraps and drapes, plastic packaging materials and disposable scissors are collected and distributed for reuse. Other reuse practices that have become commonplace in our hospitals includes sterilizing and reusing sequential stockings for orthopedic surgery, washing and reusing disposable towels, saving Styrofoam and other reusable packing materials for reuse, and returning toner cartridges to the supplier to be refilled.

As we have in past years, we proudly continue to participate in programs

that reuse our excess medical equipment in developing countries. The employees at St. Joseph's Medical Center, for example, continue to participate meaningfully and visibly in the organization, "Helping Hands," making several trips to Latin American countries and delivering tons of medical supplies and equipment to deserving hospitals.